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To the Free Citizens of BERKSHIRE.

THE important advantages attendant on the encouragement of a FREE PRESS, have ſo often been the ſubject which has employed the moſt able pens on occaſions ſimilar to the preſent, that it might perhaps be thought preſumptuous in the Editor to attempt ſtarting any new idea to convince the enlightened Citizens of Berkſhire of its utility: the following obſervations, however, on the FREEDOM of the PRESS, which are the production of an able and ſpirited writer, richly merit a place in the "WESTERN STAR."

"A FREE PRESS has been juſtly conſidered as the palladium of liberty, the ſcourge of tyrants, the terrour of ſycophants, the detector and dread of mock patriots and unprincipled demagogues—it is alſo the developer of publick and private machinations againſt the peace of ſociety, the ſchemes of ambition, avarice and peculation. It is a moſt powerful engine to counteract the plans of policy which may be laid by ariſtocratick juntos, for their own aggrandizement and the depreſſion of the people—as alſo to detect and expoſe the injuſtice of the majority of an overbearing and arbitrary democracy. In ſhort, its bleſſed effects on publick men and publick meaſures are ſuch, that the degrees of freedom and ſafety which any community enjoy, may generally be calculated by the liberalty and free ſtate of the preſs, in ſuch a community. How highly then to be valued, and how ſacredly to be preſerved is this ſublime privilege. The citizens of America are juſtly tenacious of this darling birthright. They are nurtured in the ennobling idea, that to think what they pleaſe, to ſpeak, write, and publiſh their ſentiments with decency and independency on every ſubject, conſtitute the dignified character of Americans. Having derived the moſt permanent advantages from this ſource, light and knowledge upon the great ſubjects of liberty, laws and government, and having been inſpired by ſentiments of ardour and heroiſm, originating from the ſame cauſe, to eſtabliſh an independent empire and adopt a glorious conſtitution, they are enthuſiaſtick to preſerve this ineſtimable jewel. Our children, alſo, the riſing generation, from the copious ſtreams which continually flow from this fountain, are early initiated in the ſame independent principles, and by this medium we may anticipate the tranſmiſſion of political knowledge, virtue and patriotiſm, through a long lapſe of years, producing a race of freemen, heroes and ſtateſmen, till time, the invincible leveller of empires and ſtates, ſhall ſtop the revolutions of nature."

IT muſt afford pleaſure to every well wiſher to the beſt intereſts of our county, to obſerve new channels of knowledge opening to the people. Publick papers, eſtabliſhed upon independent and impartial principles, merit the patronage of all. Upon INDEPENDENT and IMPARTIAL principles, the Editor hopes to eſtabliſh and extend the circulation of the "WESTERN STAR;" and he ſolicits the aſſiſtance of men of genius, to aid him in the proſecution of his undertaking. All who write with decency and propriety, are invited to make publick their opinions upon any political or other queſtion which reſpects the welfare of the people, through the channel of this Paper.

The Editor flatters himſelf that, by unremitting aſſiduity (aſſiſted by the lovers of ſcience) he ſhall be able to render "The STAR" a vehicle of uſeful and pleaſing information: he reſpectfully ſolicits the patronage of the FREEMEN of BERKSHIRE, and begs leave to ſubſcribe himſelf their moſt obedient Servant,

The EDITOR.

THE IRISH PEASANT.

LOOK at him, courteous readers! that poor peaſant, with all the feelings incident to human nature, with a heart as truly brave and noble as that which animated an Alexander, with a proportion of the milk of human kindneſs flowing through all his veins, and perhaps too the deſcendant of Iriſh nobility, nay of Iriſh kings and chieftains, is now labouring hard to ſupport a wife, an aged mother, and eleven children, upon 4*d.* a day, out of which he pays £.2 a year for his wretched hovel (inferior by far to a northern pigſtye) a ridge of potatoe ground; ſo that for the maintainance of fourteen perſons he has about £ 6 1*ſ.* 8*d.* a year, from which, if we deduct the tithe of his little garden, his oppreſſive hearth money tax, his miniſter's monies, and his prieſt's dues, our wretched peaſant and all his family will have about £.5 a year for clothes, tobacco and maintainance, upon an average leſs a great deal than 7*ſ.* annually a head. But that is not the worſt of the matter, for in ſome parts of the kingdom this brave, this generous fellow, who would ſhare his potatoe and water with all his heart with a ſtranger, the mendicant and the friendleſs, is uſed more cruelly than a negro ſlave, not only by the tyrant his landlord and maſter, but by the griping, avaricious proctor, the mercileſs hearth-money man, and every creature round him who can afford to wear, eat and drink better than himſelf. His family, alas, are totally naked! That old flannel jacket and broken ſheepſkin breeches, all his clothing throughout the different ſeaſons of the year; a dirty wad of ſtraw, more reſembling mire from its age, the bed of ware for the whole family, with the addition of a pig, if he is lucky enough to have one; a ragged cadow, and a pot to boil their potatoes; all their worldly effects, if ſo lucky as to have been able to ſcreen them from the rapacious claws of the ſmoke-man and his conſtable—Potatoes, as I ſaid before, their only viands, the limpid ſtream their beverage, and cow and horſe dung their fuel! Heavenly powers! ſuch wretchedneſs is hardly ſupportable! I can no more!

Prelates and kings may flouriſh or may fade,
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
But a bold peaſantry—a nation's pride,
If once deſtroyed can never be ſupplied.

GOLDSMITH.

The following production, though not of a very recent date, we think will not be unentertaining to ſome of our readers.

Remonſtrance of ALMASA, Wife of ALMAS ALI CAWN‡, to Gen. HASTINGS.

MY ſubjects ſlaughter'd, my whole kingdom ſpoil'd,
My treaſures rifled, and my huſband ſlain—
O, ſay, vile monſter! art thou ſatisfy'd?
Haſt thou, rapacious brute! ſufficient wealth?
And, cruel murd'rer, art thou fill'd with blood?
Perhaps, inſatiate, thou art thirſting ſtill
For human gore! O, may'ſt thou ever thirſt!
And may the righteous Gods deny thee water
To cool thy boiling blood! Inhuman wretch!
Have not the braveſt of my ſubjects bled?
Are they not butcher'd *all*—ALL maſſacred?
And did not India foam again with gore?
Where is the murderer who has ſlain his fellow?
Where is the robber? where the paracide?
Approach—for ye are innocent and clean!
Your ſouls are whiter than the ocean foam,
Compar'd with him, the murderer of millions!
Yes, bloody brute! the murderer of MILLIONS!
Where are the ſwarms that cover'd all my land?
That cultur'd land, of which each foot was garden,
Doom'd to ſupport the millions of my hoſt?
Are they not butchered all—all maſſacred?
And butcher'd, bloody monſter! by thy hands?
But why? becauſe, vile brute! thou muſt have wealth!
Becauſe THOU muſt have wealth my people bled!
The land was floated with a tide of gore!
My fields, my towns, my cities ſwam in blood!
And through all India one horrendous groan—
The groan of millions! echoed to the heavens.
Curſt be your nation! and forever curſt
The luckleſs hour when India firſt beheld you!
We have a cuſtom here, as old as time,
Of honouring juſtice—Why? becauſe 'tis juſtice:
And virtue is belov'd, becauſe 'tis virtue.
As Indians need no hell, they know of none:
You Chriſtians ſay you've one—'tis well you have—
Your crimes call loudly for it—and I'll ſwear,
If HASTINGS is not damn'd, your boaſted god
Is worſe than he; and heaven itſelf becomes
A black accomplice in the monſter's guilt.
Haſtings! my huſband was your priſoner;
The wealth of kingdoms flew to his relief;
You took the ranſom, and you broke your faith.
ALMAS was ſlain—'twas perjury to your ſoul!
But perjury is a little crime to you;
In ſouls ſo black it ſeems almoſt a virtue.
Know, monſter! know, that the prodigious wealth
You ſold your ſoul for, was by juſtice gain'd.
'Twas not acquir'd by rapine, force and murder—
The treaſures of my fathers; theirs by conqueſt
And legal domination; from old time
Tranſmitted by the father to the ſon,
In juſt ſucceſſion. Now you call it yours;
And dearly have you purchaſed it: for know,
When the juſt gods ſhall hear the cry of blood,
And of your hands demand the ſouls you've murder'd,
That gold will never pay their price—will never pay
Your awful ranſom! You muſt go where Almas
Sits on a lofty throne, and every hour
He ſtabs an Engliſhman, and ſweetly feaſts
Upon his bloody heart and trembling liver!
For, monſtrous wretch! to thy confuſion know,
Almas can reliſh now no other food
Than hearts of Engliſhmen! Yet thou art ſafe;
Yes, monſter, thou art ſafe from this repaſt:
A heart polluted with ten thouſand crimes
Is not a feaſt for Almas. Tremble, yet,
He'll tear that heart out from its bloody caſe,
And toſs it to his dogs; full many a vulture
Be poiſon'd by thy curſe! wolves ſhall run mad
By feeding on thy murd'rous carcaſs—MORE!
When ſome vile wretch, ſome monſter of mankind,
Some brute like thee—perhaps thy relative—
Laden with horrid crimes without a name,
Shall ſtalk through earth, and we want curſes for him—
We'll torture tho't to curſe the wretch; and then
To damn him moſt ſupreme, we'll call him——
HASTINGS!

NOTE.

‡ *IT may perhaps be neceſſary to inform the reader, that* ALMAS ALI CAWN, *was an Eaſt-Indian Prince, who governed a fertile and populous territory, within or bordering upon the footing which the Engliſh have gained in India, by injuſtice, rapine, and murder.* WARREN HASTINGS, *when Governour General of the Engliſh poſſeſſions in that quarter, eyed with deſire the riches and territory of* ALMAS ALI CAWN; *but as the conduct of the Prince was unimpeachable, he knew of no method which could even give a plauſible ſanction to the ſeizure of them. At length, however, he had him ſeized and committed to priſon, on pretence that he was fomenting diſturbances againſt the Engliſh.* ALMASA, *the wife of* ALMAS, *though ſenſible of her huſband's innocency, yet ſhe was well acquainted with the belliſh and bloodthirſty diſpoſition of* HASTINGS, *and alſo knew the reaſon for which he committed her huſband to priſon, and that it was for the ſake of obtaining his treaſures. She therefore appeared before him with ſupplication, and on her knees begged him to ſpare the life of her huſband, promiſing him all the treaſures of her kingdom, as a recompence for his releaſe; and further that ſhe and her huſband would retire to a private ſtation in ſome ſequeſtered corner of India, and there ſpend the remainder of their days, leaving their poſſeſſions in the power of* HASTINGS. *On theſe terms, the Britiſh Robber conſented to his releaſe. Joyful flew the unfortunate* ALMASA *to lay her treaſures at the feet of* HASTINGS, *and reſign her poſſeſſions, to ſave the life of him whom ſhe loved equal with herſelf. In the interim, horrid to relate! The monſter, the fiend from hell, the worſe than common murderer,* WARREN HASTINGS, *ſent orders to the priſon to have* ALMAS ALI CAWN *hung; for the deteſted wretch knew full well if he releaſed him, that another, and a very powerful witneſs would be added to the many who were teſtify concerning his enormities while in the ſtation of Governour in India. After* HASTINGS *had received the treaſures of* ALMASA, *and the reſignation of her kingdom, he gave her an order for the releaſe of* ALMAS. *She haſtened to the priſon, and while enjoying in anticipation, the pleaſure ſhe ſhould experience from a re-union with her beloved Prince, the firſt object which ſtruck her eyes on her entrance into the doleful priſon was the lifeleſs body of her huſband, ſuſpended from the wall, by a rope. Words are inadequate to paint the anguiſh of her ſoul, on beholding the dreadful ſpectacle. She retired, and after reaſon had ſubdued the firſt tumults of her grief—ſhe wrote the Britiſh aſſaſſin a letter, expreſſive of her feelings, and her ſenſe of his villany and unparelleled crimes; this letter fell into the hands of the late Dr.* LADD, *who publiſhed it in blank verſe, as it is at preſent publiſhed, it has alſo been publiſhed as it was originally wrote, and the copy it is ſaid differs not materially from the original.*

WARREN HASTINGS *on his recall from India, was impeached for his murdering the innocent inhabitants, deſtroying their Princes, plundering their towns and villages, and committing other crimes of a die equally black as any which ever diſgraced the darkeſt ages of the world.—His trial is not yet finiſhed; it is generally ſuſpected, however, by thoſe who are acquainted with the venality and corruption of the Britiſh Parliament, that this worſt of criminals, inſtead of being doomed to make his exit on the gallows, or at the ſtake, will be* REWARDED *with a Peerage.*

A.

From the UNITED STATES GAZETTE.

WISE legiſlators in all ages of the world have intimately aſſociated the principles of virtue with the principles of government; and whether it is an effect flowing from its proper cauſe, or whether it is to be attributed to the ſpecial favour of the deity, experience demonſtrates that publick virtue and publick happineſs have always been found to flouriſh together. There is no ſecurity for the general tranquility, for a ſteady and uniform obedience to the laws, on the part of the people, or for the fidelity and honour of thoſe who adminiſter the government, like a principle of reverence for the deity. How highly favoured then is our country, at the preſent auſpicious period, in having thoſe to govern who recommend, by precept and example, a devout acknowledgement of our dependence upon the creator and lord of all, for every private, ſocial and publick bleſſing!

Look to the European world; there meagre famine ſtalks through the land, while civil diſcord follows cloſe in the rear. The dogs of war ſpread havock wide, in other ill-fated realms, to ſate the luſt of ambition, and give a falſe luſtre to the diadem of deſpotiſm: the wretched peaſantry are dragged from their peaceful abodes, and have their mangled corpſes ſtrewed over the extended field of battle, or piled like rubbiſh in the yawning ditch: the fields, diſrobed of their verdure, lie uncultivated and barren, while univerſal ruin forms the ſcene. There the revolutions of government produce proſcriptions and maſſacres; while the cauſe of freedom hangs ſuſpended on the vibration of opinion.

Contraſt the above with the ſituation of the United States, and ſay if we have not reaſon to admire and adore. Peace and plenty crown our ſoil; an exuberance of the rich gifts of Providence is ours; freedom pervades our country, and laws and government give the rich bleſſings permanency and ſecurity; we have the art of making revolutions without confuſion, and of eſtabliſhing the rights of humanity without diſturbing the publick tranquility. Happy America! Mayſt thou ſtill be wiſe to diſcern the things which belong to thy peace, and be grateful to the giver of every good gift.

There are enjoyed, by the people of theſe United States local advantages, which few nations can boaſt. Our hills teem with flocks and herds; our fields are loaded with a variety of beſt corn; and our orchards and gardens abound with all kinds of the healthieſt and